



# Cumberland Island National Seashore

## GEORGIA

*Transportation Management Plan Environmental Assessment* JULY 2006

### Dear Friend of Cumberland Island National Seashore:

The National Park Service (NPS) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) in support of a transportation management plan that will allow visitors reasonable access to the northern end of Cumberland Island. The EA is needed in order to evaluate potential impacts to the natural and cultural environment from proposed transportation management activities and the potential effects on the park. The NPS is soliciting comments from the public to help identify issues and develop alternative access and transportation approaches that will be evaluated in the EA.



You are invited to become a part of this planning effort by providing your comments and/or participating in a scoping open house session. NPS staff will be available at the open house to provide information and answer questions about transportation management planning. The location and date for the open house are identified below.

### Public Information Open House

CITY	Kingsland, GA
LOCATION	Camden County Recreation Center (1050 Wildcat Drive)
DATE	Tuesday, August 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 2006
TIME	5:30 - 7:30 PM

### Why does Cumberland Island need a transportation management plan?

In 1972, Cumberland Island was saved from development when island residents, Congress, and the Andrew Mellon Foundation and others worked together to establish the Cumberland Island National Seashore as part of the National Park System. The park was created to provide for public outdoor recreation use and enjoyment of certain significant shoreline lands and waters of the United States and to preserve related scenic, scientific, and historical values. The purpose of a transportation management plan at Cumberland Island National Seashore (CUIS) is to provide access to the natural and cultural resources of the island, while preserving them for future generations.



## Currently Identified Alternatives

1. **NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE.** This alternative represents the baseline or benchmark from which to compare the impacts of the proposed project. In this case, “No-Action” means the proposed project would not take place. The no-action alternative would not meet the project need and purpose.

2. **ACTION ALTERNATIVES.** There are several different alternatives to provide motorized access to the north end of the island, with the main differences including the route to be followed, the type of vehicle, visitor access and what support facilities would be required. Each of these alternatives is noted below by category, realizing that a different combination of each category is feasible.

### Route

1. Begin at Plum Orchard or at south end of the island and proceed along Main Road to north end and return on Main Road.
2. Begin at Plum Orchard or south end of the island, proceed along Main Road to north end, follow North Cut Road to the beach and follow beach back to Stafford Beach Road, and follow Main Road back to the point of origin. Other options on this alternative would include proceeding to the south end of the island on the beach or taking the Main Road to the south end of the island from Stafford Beach Road.
3. Begin at the south end of the island follow Main Road to Stafford Beach Road and follow the beach to the north end and reverse for return, or use Main Road.

### Visitor Access

1. Guided tour
2. Shuttle service for transportation only.

### Mode

1. Electric type vehicle
2. Gas or alternative fuel van, minibus, larger shuttle, or large SUV (options of 4-wheel drive or special tires will be considered).

### Support Facilities

1. Expanded dock at Plum Orchard.
2. Operation center for initiating the tours.
3. Minor structures for new interpretive opportunities.
4. Visitor contact station/ restroom facility on north end.

### Tour Operations

Consideration of tour stops and/or points of interest alternatives is part of the planning process. Specifics including the number of tours per day, tour fees, and the possibility of implementing operations through a private concession are also being evaluated.

Historically, public access to the CUIS has been restricted due to several factors. First, the island can only be reached by ferry and it has no paved roads. Additionally, the general management plan for the park limits visitation to approximately 300 persons a day. Once on the island, visitors travel mainly by foot or bicycle, which keeps most visitors on the southern end of the island. Until 2004, a large part of the Main Road was included in the park's designated wilderness area. This designation prevented the NPS from using motorized vehicles on this portion of road for routine patrols, maintenance, or other operations.

In 2004, Congress took action to provide better Seashore access to the NPS and remedy citizen's concerns about restricted access to the cultural, natural, and scenic resources on the northern end of the island. Public Law 108-447(2004) removed the Main Road, North Cut Road and Plum Orchard Spur from the area designated as wilderness. Additionally, it directed the NPS to complete a plan that manages 5 to 8 daily round-trips to the northern end of the Island using the Main Road.

## What is NEPA?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a Federal law that serves as the Nation's basic charter to ensure that all Federal agencies plan their projects in an environmentally responsible manner. It requires that agencies consider the potential environmental impacts of their proposed actions. Additionally, it promotes better agency decision making by ensuring high quality environmental information is available to agency officials and the public before deciding whether and how to undertake a major Federal action. Through the NEPA process, you have an opportunity to learn about the NPS's proposed actions and provide timely information and comments to the NPS during the scoping period.



## Ideas to Consider

Following are a few ideas to keep in mind as you develop your comments on this proposal:

1. Do you have any ideas, issues, or concerns about the project that you think we should consider?
2. Are there any other alternatives that you think should be considered?
3. Do you have other comments and suggestions for us to consider in the environmental assessment?

## Overview of the Process

Public scoping period

Preparation of Environmental Assessment (EA)

Public review of Environmental Assessment (EA)

Analysis of public comment

Preparation of decision document

Announcement of decision on the proposal

## What does the scoping period mean?

Scoping is done in the initial phase of a project to seek input from a variety of sources. The input is used to identify issues, areas requiring additional study, and topics that will be analyzed in the EA process. This is an opportunity for you to provide us with your suggestions, comments and concerns regarding this transportation management project for CUIS.

## Have preliminary alternatives and issues been identified?

The NPS has identified preliminary alternatives and issues related to transportation management that will be analyzed through the EA process. The NPS has not yet identified specific alternatives; however, we have identified different categories of potential components. Issues and/or alternatives identified through public scoping will be added to the list of currently identified alternatives and addressed in the EA.

## Potential areas of concern

The EA will identify and analyze the following issues and impact topics.

- Vegetation
- Air quality
- Soundscapes
- Water quality, floodplains, wetlands
- Wildlife and species of special concern
- Wilderness areas
- Visitor use and experience
- Cultural resources
- Park management
- Socioeconomics
- Gateway communities
- Long-term management of resources





## Is scoping my only opportunity to comment on the project?

No, once the EA is developed, the document will be made available for public review for a 30-day period.

## What's next?

Once we have received and reviewed the scoping comments, we will begin developing alternatives. The next step will be writing the Transportation Management Plan/EA which should be available for review this winter.

## How do I comment on this Project?

Please submit your comments online at the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov>

Please provide all comments by September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006. If you wish to be added to the NPS mailing list for future correspondence, please indicate that in your response and remember to include your name and address.

If you are unable to submit comments electronically through this website, then you may also submit written comments to the address on the postmark, Attention: John Fry. You may also hand-deliver written comments to the visitor center in St. Marys GA.

*Please be aware that names and addresses of respondents may be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act. It is the practice of the NPS to make all comments, including names and addresses of respondents who provide that information, available for public review following the conclusion of the NEPA process. Individuals may request that the NPS withhold their name and/or address from public disclosure. If you wish to do this, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. Commentators using the website can make such a request by checking the box "keep my contact information private." NPS will honor such requests to the extent allowable by law, but you should be aware that NPS may still be required to disclose your name and address pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organization or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.*

## Cumberland Island National Seashore Transportation Management Plan EA

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